

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY
DEPUTY RANKING MEMBER

COMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1802

ANH "JOSEPH" CAO
2ND DISTRICT, LOUISIANA

WASHINGTON OFFICE
2113 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6636

DISTRICT OFFICE
4640 SOUTH CARROLLTON AVENUE, SUITE 120
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70119
(504) 483-2325

WEBSITE: josephcao.house.gov

May 26, 2010

The Honorable Ed Towns
Chairman
Oversight and Government Reform Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2154 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Darrell E. Issa
Ranking Member
Oversight and Government Reform Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
B-350A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Towns and Ranking Member Issa:

I wish to express my appreciation for your direct attention to the crisis in the Gulf Coast caused by the *Deepwater Horizon* spill on April 20, 2010. Further to my letter on April 28, 2010, requesting a hearing and investigation into the matter, I appreciate your taking important first steps like requesting that the Department of the Interior (DOI) release information and records related to the disaster. Today, I respectfully request that the Committee consider a hearing—in particular a field hearing in Louisiana—in the coming week to provide the Committee with a closer look at the specific circumstances of the oil spill and the economic, environmental, and health impacts on the Gulf Coast.

Since the *Deepwater Horizon* exploded off the coast of Louisiana, it has affected more than 80 miles of my home state's coastline, crippled parts of the fishing industry, and created an environmental hazard that will plague my constituents for years to come. Further, eleven lives were tragically lost in what may have been a preventable disaster.

I am particularly troubled by reports about the Mineral Management Service's ("MMS") performance that are coming out. Reports indicate that MMS had given the rig favorable security reports during its last three routine inspections and even had given the rig a safety award last year. An article in today's *Times Picayune* reports that MMS employees in Lake Charles, Louisiana, routinely accepted gifts from oil companies, including hunting and fishing trips, parties, and even Peach Bowl tickets. This revelation comes from a report released by the DOI Inspector General earlier this week and comes only two years after another investigation revealed illegal drug use, sexual misconduct and improper fraternization with oil industry executives by MMS employees.

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Further, these reports come just as British Petroleum executives testified before the House Committee on Natural Resources that the company's internal investigation revealed a series of equipment failures and mistakes that led to the blowout and fire on the rig. This begs questioning into how the MMS, the agency charged with ensuring the safety of the platform, not only certified it for operation, but gave it a safety award. While Secretary Salazar's efforts to divide the agency's mission is important, I believe it is critical that a thorough investigation of MMS' certification and royalty collection processes is conducted to ensure they are thorough, clear, and strenuous. In light of the mounting reports of misconduct by MMS officials it is equally critical to have a review of their actions leading up to and after the *Deepwater Horizon* explosion.

Of great concern, too, is the unprecedented volume of oil that is spewing from the well while a long-term, permanent solution to capping the well remains elusive. With one of the largest environmental disaster the nation has ever seen it is imperative the Committee look review the status of short-term and long-term response.

I appreciate your assistance on this matter and your consideration of this and my previous request for a Committee hearing, and I look forward to discussing this with you at your earliest convenience. Please do not hesitate to contact my staff, Monica Sanders, or me at (202) 225-6636.

Sincerely,



Anh "Joseph" Cao
Member of Congress

Enclosure